Some Account of the Forepart of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge

ELIZABETH ASHBRIDGE

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INTRODUCTION

SOMETHING of a subtle personal nature exhales from the brown leaves and faded ink of the century-old note book in which a Friend had copied this account of Elizabeth Ashbridge's life. Comparing it with the various editions which were printed, it is evident that this copy was taken from her own manuscript account, and the story of a beautiful and spiritual woman is revealed in that clear running script more intimately than in the cold monotony of type.

It was at once a disappointment and a treasure trove to find that this Autobiography had been previously printed, for in the various editions, of which the earliest is dated 1774 and the latest 1846, lie the few further facts to be found about the writer's life.

Hers was a strange career indeed, but the account she has left is really the history of the development of a mystical soul; and though Elizabeth Ashbridge went through thrilling adventures enough, she mentions them but as incidental to her spiritual development.

Every where in the manuscript Elizabeth Ashbridge unconsciously reveals the charm that must have been hers, a charm both physical and mental. Fond of dancing and singing, evidently attractive of love and admiration, from her earliest infancy the spiritual world was very near to her.

One cannot help wondering what manner of man that stocking weaver was, who first charmed her away from her mother's side. With a child such as this Elizabeth of fourteen, of whom the Irish priest said later, "that she was the most innocent creature that ever made confession to him," it cannot have been a mere vulgar intrigue. That weaver was something strange and out of the common; not a word of reproach does she breathe against him, and he was so enshrined in her memory, that, writing some twenty years after, she calls him by no other name than "the darling of my soul."

The story of her journey to America under the terrible indenture system, reads almost as a parallel with R. L. Stevenson's "Kidnapped," and is a vivid testimony to its attendant evils. It was only by a miracle that this fair creature remained unsmirched by the ordeal, and she

moves among those sordid characters as some being of another world, brighter by the contrast.

With her independent mind, and soul readily open to spiritual impressions, it is not surprising that she came by hard and devious ways to the form of religion suited to her needs. During the time that she was examining the Romish faith she must have been a tantalizing enquirer to that Jacobite priest; so much of intellect and so much of mysticism combined in her character to make her a desirable convert. Indeed that witty cynic, who was about the same date enquiring into the beliefs of the Quakers, would himself have delighted in her reply to the priest's demand that she must swear to believe that the Pretender was the true King, and son of King James; "I did not believe it to be essential to salvation. . . . And to take an oath to any such thing would be very unsafe."

It is not easy to understand how such a character should have believed herself to have actually heard unearthly voices. It may be that these manifestations came to her at a time when she was physically prostrated by her troubles, in much the same way that many religious people have, by fasting and self imposed hard-

ships, so reduced their bodies, that their souls seem to have been able to project themselves into the atmosphere of the spirit world.

Elizabeth Ashbridge was one of those rare souls to whom the direct Divine guidance is a very real thing. Christian believers may be classed under three main groups; those who believe that God speaks to man through an inspired Church; those who hold the Bible to be the one great guide; those who seek for guidance in their own souls, in the direct inspiration of God within the individual. To the first and last sections belong Catholics and Quakers, and, strange as it may seem, the difference between these two bodies is really only the fundamental one of yielding to the inspiration by God of men collectively, as a Church, or of submission to the same inspiration within the heart of each individual.

From either standpoint follow logically the results we know, ritualism and complete simplicity of worship. With the exception of the worship of the Virgin, prayers to the saints and for the dead, Quakerism holds spiritually all the truths which the Catholic Church embodies in ceremony. An interesting comparison may be drawn between Catholicism,

built up on spiritual truths crystallised into forms, appealing to an enormous number of the childlike souls of the world, and through its inner meanings to a few of the most advanced, and Quakerism, appealing to those spiritually minded few alone. One, an aggressive religion, the other a religion of waiting on the Lord. Catholicism sets great store by the outward observance of the Sacraments, appealing to the weakest of mankind, who undoubtedly gain great refreshment thereby; Quakerism sets the task to the strong of making each act of life a continual sacrament.

The Catholic at various times submits to fasts, retirements, penances; the Quaker denied himself, and in many cases still denies himself, those of the pleasant things of life, and most of its luxuries, which he thinks might hinder the advancement of his soul. The Quaker ideal is the spiritual ideal of the cloistered saint, carried out by men and women who take their full part in the development of the world. And the spirit which finally led Elizabeth Ashbridge into the Society of Friends, would probably have left her in the Roman church but for that fatal intolerance of crystallized religion which told her that her mother,

without the Roman pale, would be eternally lost.

At the same date that Elizabeth Ashbridge was enquiring concerning the Church of Rome, Voltaire was holding those conversations on Quakers with the good "André Pitt," which still remain a wonderful exposition of the fundamentals of Quakerism. Like Elizabeth Ashbridge the Frenchman was horrified at the Friends' view of the sacraments.

"Mon cher monsieur," dis-je, "êtes vous baptisé ?"

"Non," me répondit le quaker, "et mes confrères ne le sont point."

"Comment, morbleu, repris-je, vous n'êtes donc pas Chrétiens ?

"Mon ami," repartit-il d'un ton doux, "ne jure point ; nous sommes Chrétiens, mais nous ne pensons pas que le Christianisme consiste à jeter de l'eau sur la tête avec un peu de sel." . . .

"Au nom de Dieu ! cher homme, que je vous baptise."

"S'il ne fallait que cela pour condescendre á ta faiblesse, nous le ferions volontiers," repartit-il gravement : "nous ne condamnons personne pour user de la cérémonie du baptême,

mais nous croyons que ceux qui professent une religion toute sainte et toute spirituelle doivent s'abstenir, autant qu'ils le peuvent, des cérémonies judaïques."

It was undoubtedly this sense of the spiritual freedom of the Quakers and their large tolerance of the necessity that various souls should find various expression in their religious needs, that led Voltaire, the keenest intellect of his day, to devote four of his seven Chapters on English religion to the Quakers. And this, joined to the fact that Quakerism had no priesthood, at one time made him contemplate the founding of a somewhat similar body in France.

It has been well said that Quakers regard the human soul "as an organ upon which God performs divine harmonies," and if Elizabeth Ashbridge's heart was tuned to the slightest impressions from the other world, it was only through much suffering that that harmony was reached. She underwent great hardships at the hands of her second husband, whose name was Sullivan, on the subject of her changed views of religion. But her brave fortitude so upheld her and at last so won upon him, that even that dissipated man was finally strong enough to

die for a principle which he had learned from his wife.

Very few further details can be found of her life apart from her own account. But one or two facts may be surmised. The first time her autobiography was published, it was printed at Nantwich, in Cheshire, near the place of her birth, and the inference is that it was given to the world under the auspices of her own family with whom she had been long reconciled. Appended to it is a rather un-Quakerly Lament on her death, which bears internal evidence of having been written by her Mother, and which contains expressions which may be fairly translated as referring to her great personal charms. This touching document is appended in full; also it has seemed well to print the testimonies which the Irish Friends have placed on record regarding this strange, strong character, at the time of her death.

GUILDFORD,
March 1904.

QUAKER GREY

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

MY life being attended with many uncommon occurrences, some of which I, through disobedience brought on myself; and others, I believe, being sent for my good, I therefore thought proper to make some remarks on the dealings of Divine Goodness to me, and I have often had cause with David to say, *It was good for me that I have been afflicted.* Most earnestly do I desire, that whosoever reads the following lines, may take warning and shun the evils that I, through the deceitfulness of Satan, have been drawn into.

To begin with my beginning, I was born in Middlewich, in Cheshire, in the year 1713, of honest Parents, my Father a Doctor of Physic or Surgeon; his name was Thomas Sampson, my Mother's name was Mary. My Father was a man of good character, but not so strictly religious as my Mother, who was a pattern of

virtue to me. I was the only child of my Father, but not of my Mother, she being a widow when he married her, having had two children by her former husband, a son and a daughter.

Soon after my birth my Father took to the sea, and followed his profession on shipboard for many long voyages, till I was of the age of twelve years, when he retired. For this reason my education lay mostly on my Mother, in which she discharged her duty, endeavouring to instil into me in my tender age the principles of virtue, for which I since had cause to be thankful to the Lord, that he had blessed me with such a parent, whose good advice and counsel to me has been *As bread cast upon the waters.* May all Parents have the same testimony in their children's breasts. In a word she was good to all about her, and beloved by most that knew her, though not of the same religious persuasion I am now of.

But alas for me! As soon as the time came that my Mother might reasonably have expected the benefit of her labours and to have had comfort in me, I left her, of which I shall speak in its place.

In my very infancy I had an awful regard

to religion, and a great love for religious people, particularly for ministers. I sometimes wept with sorrow that I was not a boy that I might have been one, believing them all to be good men, and so beloved of God.

I also had a great love for the poor, remembering I had read, *That they were blessed of the Lord*, this I took to mean such as were poor in this world. I often went to their poor cottages to see them, and used to think they were better off than I. If I had any money or anything else likely to be of use I would give it to them, remembering that those that gave to such, lent to the Lord, for I had, even when very young, earnest desires to be beloved of Him, and used to remark those that pretended to religion, and when I have heard gentlemen swear, it used to make me sorry, for my mother told me that if I used any naughty words God would not love me.

As I grew up I took notice that there were several different Religious Societies, to whose services I often went alone, and wept with desire that I might be directed to the right. Thus my young years were attended with these and such like tender desires, and though I was sometimes guilty of faults incident to

children, yet I always found something within me that made me sorry.

From my infancy till fourteen years of age, I was as innocent as most children, about which time my sorrows began and have continued for the most part of my life ever since. I gave way to a foolish passion, in setting my affections on a young man who courted me, without my Parents' knowledge, till I consented, and, with sorrow of heart I may say, I suffered myself to be carried off in the night, and before my parents found me, I was married; though as soon as they missed me search was made, but all in vain, till it was too late to recover me.

This precipitate action plunged me into a deal of sorrow, and I was soon smote with remorse for thus leaving my Parents, whose right it was to have disposed of me to their content or at least to have been consulted in the affair. I was soon chastened for my disobedience, Divine Providence left me to see my error; in five months I was stript of the Darling of my Soul and left a young and disconsolate widow.

I then had no home to fly to, my Husband was poor, and had nothing but his trade, which was that of a stocking weaver, and my

Father was so displeased that he would do nothing for me. My dear Mother had some compassion and used to keep me amongst the neighbours.

At last by my Mother's advice I went out to Dublin, to one of her relations, in hopes that absence would regain my Father's affection, but he continued inflexible and would not send for me again and I durst not return unless he did so.

This relation was one of the people called Quakers ; his conduct was so different from the manner of my education (which was in the way of the Church of England) that it proved very disagreeable to me. Though as I have said I had had a religious education yet I was allowed to sing and dance, which my Cousin disallowed of, and I, having a great vivacity in my natural disposition, could not bear to give way to his gloomy sense of sorrow and conviction, and therefore, let it have a wrong effect.

I gave myself up to be more light and airy than ever, for which my Cousin often reproved me. But I then thought, as many now do of this Society, that 'twas the effect of singularity, and, therefore, I would not bear it nor be

controlled, and having a distant relation in the west of Ireland, I left Dublin and went thither, and there I might take my swing, for what rendered me disagreeable to the former was quite pleasing to the latter. Between these two relations I spent three years and three months.

While I was in Ireland I contracted an intimate acquaintance with a widow and her daughter who were Papists, with whom I used to have a deal of discourse about religion, they in defence of their faith, and I of mine. For though I was wild, yet it often made me very thoughtful. The old woman would tell me of such mighty miracles done by their Priests, that I began to be shaken, and thought that if they did these things they must indeed be the Apostles' successors. The old woman perceived it, and one day in a rapture said, "Oh, if I can (under God), be the happy instrument to convert you to the Holy Catholic Faith, all the sins that I have committed will be forgiven."

In a while it got so far, that the Priest came to converse with me. I, being young and my judgment weak, was ready to believe what they said, and, wild as I was, it cost me many

tears with desires that I might be rightly directed. For some time I frequented their place of worship, but none of my relations knew my motive.

At length, I concluded never to be led darkly into their belief, and that if their articles of faith were good, they would not be opposed to my knowing them. So the next time I had an opportunity with the Priest, I told him that I had some thoughts of becoming one of his flock, but did not care to join until I knew all I must agree to, I therefore desired him to let me see their principles. He answered that I must first confess my sins to him, and gave me till the next day to consider them. I was not much against it, for (thought I) I have done nothing, if all the world knew, that any could hurt me for, and if what this man says be true, it will be for my good.

When he came again I told him all that I could remember, which for my part I thought bad enough. But he thought me (as he said) "the most innocent creature that ever made confession to him."

When I had done, the Priest took out a book and read it, all which I was to swear to, if I joined with them. Though young, I made my

remarks as he went on, but I shall neither give myself the trouble of writing, nor any of reading a deal of the ridiculous stuff it contained. What, however, made me sick of my new intentions (I believe I should have swallowed the rest) was, that I must swear that I believed the Pretender to be the true heir to the Crown of England, and that he was King James' son; also, that whoever died out of the Pale of that Church would be damned.

As to the first, I did not believe it to be essential to salvation, whether I believed in it or not, and to take an oath to any such thing would be very unsafe. The second, however, struck directly against Charity which the Apostle preferred before all other graces, and besides I had a religious Mother who was not of that opinion. I thought it therefore barbarous in me to believe she would be damned, yet concluded to take it into consideration. However, before I saw the Priest again, a sudden turn took hold, which put a final end to it.

CHAPTER II.

SHE GOES TO AMERICA.

MY Father still keeping me at such a distance, I thought myself quite shut out of his affections, and therefore concluded since my absence were so agreeable to him, he should have it, and at this time making acquaintance with a gentlewoman, that then lately came from Pensylvania (and was going back again), where I had an Uncle, my Mother's Brother, I soon agreed with her for my passage, and being ignorant of the nature of an indenture became bound (though it is repugnant to law) in a private manner, for fear I should be found out.

As soon as this was over, she invited me to go and see the vessel I was to go in, to which I readily consented, not knowing what would follow. When I came on board I found a young woman, I afterwards understood was of very good family, whom this creature had deluded away. I was extremely pleased to think I should have so agreeable a companion, and while we

were in discourse, our kidnapper left us and went on shore, and when I wanted to go, I was not permitted.

Here I was kept near three weeks, at the end whereof the friends of the other young woman found her out, and fetched her on shore, by which means mine found me and sent the water bailiff, who took me also ashore. Our gentlewoman was forced to keep in hiding or she would have been laid fast.

I was kept close for two weeks, but at last found means to get away, for I was so filled with the thoughts of coming to America, I could not give it up, and meeting with the captain, enquired when they sailed, he told me; so I got on board and came in the same ship, and I have had cause to believe there was a Providential hand in it.

There were sixty Irish servants on board (I came now unindentured) and several English passengers, but not one of them understood the Irish language but myself. I had taken no small pains to learn it, and could understand so much as to discover anything they discoursed upon, which was of great service to us all. There was also on board the gentlewoman before mentioned, and a young man, her husband's

brother (twenty of the servants belonged to her). While we were off the coast of Ireland, for the winds kept us there some weeks, I overheard those creatures contriving how they should be free when they came to America. To accomplish the design, they concluded to rise and kill the ship's crew and all the English passengers on board, and the above mentioned young man was to navigate the vessel.

The same night I discovered their barbarous design privately and the captain let the English know it. The next day they bore for the shore, and some small distance off the Cove of Cork lowered sail and dropt anchor, under pretence that the wind was not fair to stand their course. They then hoisted out the boat, and invited the passengers to go ashore to divert themselves, and among the rest the rebel's captain, who went, which was all that was wanted.

As soon as he was ashore, the rest left him and came on board. Our captain immediately ordered to weigh anchor and hoist sail, but there was a great cry for the young man on shore. The captain told them, that the wind freshened up, and he would not wait for his own son. So their treachery was betrayed in

good time and in such a manner that they did not suspect us; for 'twas thought most advisable to keep it private, lest any of them should do me a mischief. But at length they found out that I understood Irish, by my smiling at an Irish story they were telling, and from that time they devised many ways to hurt me, and some of them were convicted and put in irons for it.

In nine weeks from the time we left Dublin we arrived at New York, on the 15th of 7th month 1732, and then those, to whom (under Providence) I had been instrumental to preserve life, proved treacherous to me. I was a stranger, the captain got an indenture wrote, and demanded of me to sign it, withal threatening a gaol if I refused. I told him I could find means to satisfy for my passage without becoming bound. They then told me that I might take my choice either to sign that or have that I signed in Ireland in force against me. By this time I had heard the character of the aforesaid woman, that she was a vile creature, and feared that if ever I was in her power she would use me ill on her Brother's account. I therefore in a fright signed the last, and though there was no

magistrate present, it did well enough to make me a servant for four years.

In two weeks I was sold, and were it possible to convey in characters a sense of the sufferings of my servitude, 'twould make the most strong heart pity the misfortunes of a young creature as I was, who had had a tender education. For though my Father had no great estates yet he lived well and I had been used to little but my school. But now it had been better for me if I had been brought up to more hardships. For a while at first I was used pretty well, but in a little time the scale turned, occasioned by a difference that happened wherein I was innocent.

From that time my master set himself against me, and was inhuman. He would not suffer me to have clothes to be decent in, and I had to go barefoot in his service in the snowy weather and the meanest drudgery, wherein I suffered the utmost hardships that my body was able to bear, which, with the above mentioned troubles had like to have been my ruin to all Eternity, had not Almighty God in mercy interposed.

My master would seem a very religious man, taking the sacrament ; and he would pray

every night in his family, except when his prayer book was lost, for he never prayed without it, to my knowledge. The aforesaid difference was of such a nature as made me sick of his religion ; for though I had little myself, yet I had an idea what sort of people they should be that professed religion. At length the Old Enemy by insinuations, made me believe there was no such thing, and that the convictions I had felt from my infancy were only the prejudice of education ; which convictions were at times so strong that I have gone alone and fallen with my face on the ground and cried for mercy. But now I began to be hardened, and for some months I do not remember that I felt any such thing, so was ready to conclude that there was no God, that such thoughts were foolish, and all but priestcraft.

And though I had a great veneration for the ministers of religion in my infancy, I now looked upon that set of men in another manner. What corroborated me in my atheistical opinion was, my master's house used to be a great resort of the Clergy, which gave me much opportunity to make my remarks. Sometimes those that came out of

the country used to lodge there, and their evening diversions used to be cards and singing, and, in a few minutes after, prayers and singing Psalms to Almighty God.

I used to think, if there be a God, he is a pure Being, and will not hear the prayers of polluted lips. But He, that hath in an abundant manner shown mercy to me (as will be seen in the sequel), did not long suffer me to doubt in this matter, but in a moment when my feet were near the bottomless pit, plucked me back.

To one woman (and no other), I had told the difference which two years before had happened between my master and me. By her means he heard of it, and though he knew it was true, yet he sent for the Town Whipper to correct me for it.

I was called in ; he never asked me if I had told any such thing, but ordered me to strip. At which my heart was ready to burst, for I could as freely give up my life, as suffer such ignominy.

I then said, "If there be a God, be graciously pleased to look down on one of the most unhappy creatures, and plead my cause, for Thou knowest what I have said is the truth." And

had it not been for a principle more noble than he was capable of, I would have told it before his wife.

I then fixed my eyes upon the barbarous man, and, in a flood of tears, said, "Sir, if you have no pity on me, yet for my Father's sake spare me from this shame (for before this he had heard in several ways of my parents), and if you think I deserve such punishment, do it yourself."

He then took a turn over the room, and bid the Whipper go about his business, and I came off without a blow, which I thought something remarkable.

But now I began to think my credit gone. For they said many things of me, which I thank God were not true. And here I suffered so much cruelty I could not bear it. The enemy immediately came in and put me in a way how to be rid of it all, and tempted me to end my miserable life. I joined with it, and for that purpose went into the garret to hang myself.

Now it was, I was convinced there was a God. For as my feet entered the place, horror seized me to that degree I trembled much. And as I stood like one in a maze, it seemed as though I heard a voice say, *There is a Hell beyond the grave.* At which I was greatly as-

tonished, and I was now convinced there was an Almighty Power, to whom I prayed, saying, "God be merciful, and enable me to bear whatsoever Thou, in Thy Providence, shalt bring or suffer to come upon me for my disobedience." I then went down again, but let no one know what I had been about.

Soon after this, I had a dream, and though some make a ridicule of dreams, yet this seemed a significant one to me, and therefore I shall mention it.

I thought somebody knocked at my door; by which when I had opened it there stood a grave woman holding in her right hand an oil lamp burning, who, with a solid countenance fixed her eyes upon me and said, "I am sent to tell thee that if thou wilt return to the Lord thy God, Who hath created thee, He will have mercy upon thee, and thy lamp shall not be put out in obscure darkness."

Upon which the light flamed from the lamp in an extraordinary manner, and she left me, and I awoke.

But alas, I did not give up, nor join with the Heavenly Vision, as I think I may call it. For after this I was like to have been caught in another snare, which if I had, would probably

have been my ruin, from which I was also preserved.

I was accounted a fine singer and dancer, in which I took great delight, and once falling in with some of the Playhouse Company that were then in New York, they took a great fancy to me, as they said, and would have persuaded me to have become an actor amongst them, and they would find means to get me away from my cruel servitude, and I should live like a lady.

The proposal took with me, and I used no small pains to qualify myself for it, by reading their play books, even when I should have slept. Yet I was put to the demur when I came to consider what my father would say, who had forgiven my disobedience in marrying, and earnestly desired to see me again, and had sent for me home. But my proud heart would not consent to return in so mean a condition, and I therefore chose bondage rather.

So, when I had served about three years, I bought off the remainder of my time, and then set to my needle, by which I could maintain myself handsomely. But (alas) I was not yet sufficiently punished. I had got from one cruel servitude, and then, not content, got into another for life.

CHAPTER III.

HER SECOND MARRIAGE.

A FEW months after, I married a young man that fell in love with me for my dancing, a poor motive for a man to choose a Wife, or a woman a Husband. But for my part I fell in love with nothing I saw in him, and it seems unaccountable that I, who had both in this Country and in Ireland refused several, at last married a man I had no value for.

In a few days after we were married, he took me from New York, for, being a school-master he had lived in the country to keep school. He led me to New England, and then settled in a place called Westerley, in Rhode Island government.

With regard to religion, he was much like myself, without any, and when in drink would use the worst of oaths. I do not mention this to expose my husband, but to shew the effect it had on me. For I now saw myself ruined, as I thought, being joined to a

man I had no love for, and one that was a pattern of no good to me.

Then I began to think, what a couple we were, like two joining hands and going to destruction, and upon it concluded, if I was not forsaken of Heaven, to alter my mode of life. To set my affections on the Divine Being and not to love my husband seemed impossible. I then daily desired with tears that my affections might be in a right manner set on my husband, and I can say with truth, in a little time my love was sincere to him. I now resolved to do my duty to God; and expecting I should come to the knowledge of it by the Scriptures, I took to reading them with this resolve, to follow their directions.

But the more I read, the more uneasy I grew, especially about Baptism. For although I had reason to believe I had been sprinkled in my infancy, because at the age of thirteen I was confirmed by the Bishop, yet I could not find any precedent for that practice, and lighting on that place where it is said, *He that believeth and is baptized etc.*, here I observed belief went before Baptism, which I was not capable of when sprinkled. Hence I grew much dissatisfied, and being in a neighbour-

hood where there were mostly Seventh-day Baptists, I conversed much with them. For I began to think the Seventh day was the true Sabbath, and for some time kept it.

My husband did not now oppose me, for he saw I grew more affectionate to him, and did not leave off singing and dancing, so that I could divert him when he asked me. But I did not find that satisfaction I had expected in what I had done.

Soon after this my Husband and I concluded to go to England, and for that end went to Boston, and there found a ship bound for Liverpool. We agreed for our passage and expected to sail in two weeks. But my time was not to go yet, for there came a gentleman that hired the ship to carry him and his attendants to Fayal, and to take no other passengers. And there being no other ship near sailing, we for that time gave it out.

We staid several weeks in Boston, and I still continued dissatisfied as to religion, though I had reformed my conduct so as to be considered, by those that knew me, a sober woman, yet I was not content. For even then I expected to find the sweets of such a change, and though several thought me religious I

durst not think so myself. But what to do to be so, was as far from me as ever.

I used to converse with people of all Societies as opportunity offered, and like many others had a good deal of head knowledge, and several Societies thought me of their opinion severally, but I joined strictly with none, resolved never to leave seeking till I had found the truth. This was in the twenty-second year of my age.

While we were in Boston, I one day went to the Quakers' meeting, not expecting to find what I wanted, but out of curiosity. At this meeting, a woman Friend spoke, at which I was a little surprised ; for though I had heard of women preaching, I had never heard one before, I looked on her with pity for her ignorance (as I thought), and with contempt of her practice, saying to myself, "I am sure you are a fool, and if ever I turn Quaker (which will never be), I would never be a preacher." In these and such-like thoughts I sat while she was speaking.

After she had done, stood up a man, which I could better bear. He spoke well, and I thought raised sound doctrine from good Joshua's resolution, *As for me and my house, we*

will serve the Lord. After he sat a while silent, he went to prayer, which was attended with something so awful and affecting as drew tears to my eyes, though a stranger to the cause.

Soon after this we left Boston, and my husband being given to rambling (which was very disagreeable to me, but I must submit) we came to Rhode Island by water, and from thence to Long Island, where we lived, to keep school.

This place was mostly settled with Presbyterians. I soon got acquainted with some of the most religious of them, for though I was poor, yet I was favoured with reception among the people of the best credit, and had frequent discourses with them. But the more I was acquainted, the worse I liked their opinions, and so remained dissatisfied.

The old enemy of my happiness, knowing I was resolved to abandon him and seek place for my soul, afresh assaulted me and laid a bait into which he had like to have caught me. One day being abroad, at my return home I found the people, in whose house we had taken a room, had left some flax in an apartment through which I passed to my own, at

sight of which I was immediately tempted to steal some to make me some thread. I went to it, took a small bunch in my hand, at which I was smote with remorse, being of such a kind that my very nature abhorred. I laid it down, saying, " Lord, keep me from such a vile action as this."

But the twisting serpent did not leave me yet, but assaulted me so strong and prevalent, that I took it into my own room. But when I came there horror seized me, and bursting into tears I cried, " Oh, Thou, the God of mercy, enable me to resist this temptation." Which He in mercy did, and gave me the power to say, " Get thee behind me Satan, I will resist thee till I die, before I yield."

I then carried it back and was filled with thanksgiving to God, and wrapt into such a frame as I have not words to express, neither can any guess, but those that have resisted temptation. These have in their own experience to taste the sweet peace that flows to the soul.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH DEEP WATERS

MY Husband soon moved further up the Island, where we were near a Church of England, to which I used to go; for though I disliked some of their ways, yet I still liked them best.

Now a fresh exercise fell upon me of such sort as I never heard of any being in the like, and while under it I thought myself alone. I was, in Second month, sitting by a fire in company with several, my husband also being present, when there arose a thunder gust, and with the noise that struck mine ear a voice attended, even as the sound of a mighty trumpet piercing through me, with the words: "O Eternity! Eternity! The endless term of long Eternity!" At which I was exceedingly surprised sitting speechless as in a trance, and in a moment saw myself in such a state as made me despair of ever being in a happy one.

I seemed to see a long roll wrote in black

characters, at sight whereof I heard a voice say to me, "This is thy Sins."

I then saw sin to be exceedingly sinfull. But this was not all, for immediately followed another voice, saying, "And the Blood of Christ is not sufficient to wash it out. This is shown thee that thou mayest confess thy damnation is just, and not in order that they shall be forgiven."

All this while I sat speechless, at last I got up trembling and threw myself on the bed.

The company thought my indisposition proceeded only from a fright at the thunder, but alas it was of another kind. From that time for several months I was in the utmost despair ; and if at any time I would endeavour to hope, or to lay hold of any gracious promise, the old accuser would come in, telling me it was now too late. That I had withstood the day of mercy till it was over and that I should only add to my sins, by praying for pardon, and provoke Divine vengeance to make a monument of wrath of me.

I was like one already in torment. My sleep departed from me, and I ate little. I became extremely melancholy and took no delight in anything. Had all the world been mine and

the glory of it, I would now have given it for one glimpse of hope.

My husband was shocked to see me so changed. I that once could divert him with a song (in which he greatly delighted) nay even after I grew religious, could do it no longer. My singing was turned into mourning and my dancing into lamentations. My nights and days were one continual scene of sorrow.

I let none know my desperate condition. My husband used all means in his power to divert my melancholy, but in vain. The wound was too deep to be healed by any thing short of the true Balm of Gilead. I durst not go much alone, fearing evil spirits, but when I did, my husband would not suffer it. And if I took the Bible he would take it from me, saying, "How you are altered! You used to be agreeable company, but now I have no comfort of you." I endeavoured to bear all with patience, expecting soon to bear more than man could inflict upon me.

At length I went to the Priest, to see if he could relieve me. But he was a stranger to my case. He desired me to take the Sacrament, and to use some innocent diversions, and lent me a book of prayer which he said was fit for

my condition. But all in vain. As to the Sacrament, I thought myself in a state very unfit to receive it worthily, and I would not use the prayers, for I then thought that if ever my prayers would be acceptable, I should be enabled to pray without form.

Diversions were burdensome, for, as it is said above, my husband used all means tending that way to no purpose. Yet he with several others persuaded me to the raising of a building, where much company was collected, in expectation of alleviating my grief. But contrariwise it proved a means of adding to my sorrow. For in the meantime there came an officer to summons a jury to enquire concerning the body of a man that had hanged himself, which, as soon as I understood, I seemed to be attended with a voice, saying, "Thou shalt be the next monument of such wrath, for thou art not worthy to die a natural death."

For two months I was daily tempted to destroy myself, and sometimes so strongly that I could hardly resist. Through fear of that sort when I went alone, I used to throw off my apron and garters, and if I had a knife cast it from me, crying, "Lord keep me from taking

that life Thou gave me and which Thou wouldst have made happy if I on my part had joined with the offers of Thy grace, and had regarded the convictions of my youth. The fault is my own, Thou, oh Lord, art clear."

And yet so great was my agony, that I desired Death, that I might know the worst of my torments, of which I had so sharp a taste. All this while I could not shed a tear. My heart was as hard as a stone, and my life miserable. But God Who is full of mercy and long forbearance, in His own good time, delivered my soul out of this thraldom.

For one night as I lay in bed (my husband by me asleep) bemoaning my miserable condition, I had strength to cry out, "Oh my God, hast thou no mercy left? Look down, I beseech Thee, for Christ's sake, Who hast promised that all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven. Lord if Thou be graciously pleased to extend this promise to me, an unworthy creature trembling before Thee, there's nothing Thou shalt command but I will obey."

In an instant my heart was tendered and I dissolved in a flood of tears, abhorring my past offences and admiring the mercies of God. I was now made to hope in Christ my Redeemer,

and enabled to look on Him with an eye of faith, and I saw fulfilled what I believed when the Priest lent me his book, that if ever my prayers should be accepted, I should be enabled to pray without form, and so I used form no more.

Nevertheless, I thought I ought to join to some religious Society, but I met with none that I liked in everything, yet the Church of England seemed nearest. I joined with them and took the Sacrament, and I can say in truth, that I did it with reverence and fear.

Being thus relieved from deep distress, I seemed like another creature, and went often alone without fear, tears abundantly flowed from mine eyes. And once as I was abhorring myself in great humility of mind, I heard a gracious voice full of love saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, only obey what I shall make known unto thee."

I then entered into a covenant saying, "my Soul doth magnify Thee, the God of Mercy, if Thou will vouchsafe Thy Grace, the rest of my days shall be devoted to Thee, and if it be Thy will that I beg my bread I'll be content, and submit to Thy Providence."

CHAPTER V.

SHE GOES INTO PENSYLVANIA.

I NOW began to think of my relations in Pensylvania, whom I had not yet seen, and having a great desire that way, I got leave of my husband to go, I also had a certificate from the Priest, in order that, if I made any stay, I might be received as a Church member wherever I came.

On setting out my husband bore me company to the Blazing Star ferry, saw me safe over, and then returned. In the way, near a place called Maidenhead, I fell from my horse and was disabled from travelling for some time, and abode at the house of an honest-like Dutchman, who, with his wife, were very kind to me. And though they had much trouble in going for the doctor and waiting upon me (for several days I was unable to help myself) yet would they have nothing for it which I thought exceeding kind. They charged me, if ever I came that way again, to call and lodge there. I mention this, because

by-and-bye I shall have occasion to remember this place again.

Hence I came to Trent-town ferry, where I met with no small mortification upon hearing that my relations were Quakers, and, what was worst of all, my Aunt a preacher. I was sorry to hear it, for I was exceedingly prejudiced against this people, and would often wonder with what face they could call themselves Christians. I repented my coming and had a mind to turn back. At last I concluded to go and see them, since I was so far on my journey, but I expected little comfort from my visit. But see how God brings unforseen things to pass, for by going there, I was brought to the knowledge of His truth.

I went from Trent-town to Philadelphia by water, and thence to my Uncle's on horseback. Here I met with a very kind reception, for though my own Uncle was dead, and my Aunt married again, yet both her husband and she received me in a very kind manner.

I had not been there three hours, before I met with a shock, and my opinion began to alter with respect to these people. For, seeing a book lying on the table, and being much for reading, I took it up. My Aunt, observing,

said, " Cousin, that is a Quakers' book." For perceiving I was not a Quaker, I suppose she thought I would not like it.

I made her no answer, but revolving in my mind, " What can those people write about ? For I have heard that they deny the Scriptures, and have no other Bible, but George Fox's Journal, and deny all the Holy Ordinances," I resolved to read the book.

But I had not read two pages, before my very heart burned within me, and tears came in my eyes, which I was afraid would be seen, therefore with the book I walked into the garden, sat down, and the piece (Samuel Crisp's two letters) being small, I read it through before I went in. Though I sometimes was forced to stop, to give vent to my tears, my heart as it were uttering these involuntary expressions :

" My God, must I (if ever I come to the knowledge of Thy truth) be of this man's opinion, who has sought Thee as I have done, and join with those people that a few hours ago I preferred the Baptists before ?

" Oh, Thou, the God of my salvation and of my life, who hast in an abundant manner manifested Thy long suffering and tender

mercy in redeeming me as from the lowest Hell, a monument of Thy grace :

" Lord, my soul beseeches Thee to direct me in the right way, and keep me from ruin ; and then, according to my covenant, I will think nothing too near to part with, for Thy name's sake. If these things be so, oh happy this people beloved of God ! "

After I came a little to myself again, I washed my face lest any in the house should perceive I had been weeping, but that night I got but little sleep. For the old Enemy began to suggest, that I was one of those that wavered and was not steadfast in the faith, advancing several texts of Scripture against me and them. As, that in the latter days there should be those that would deceive the very elect, and these were they ; and that I was in danger of being deluded. Here the subtle serpent transformed himself so hideously, that I verily took this to be a timely caution from a good Angel, so resolved to be aware of these deceivers, and for some weeks I did not touch any of their books.

The next day being the first of the week, I wanted to have gone to church (which was distant about four miles), but, being a stranger

and having nobody to go with me, was forced to give it up ; and as most of the family were going to meeting, I went with them, but with this conclusion—not to be like them. And so it was, for while they sat in silence I looked over the meeting, thinking within myself, how like fools these people sit, how much better were it to stay at home and read the Bible, or some other good book, than to come here and go to sleep. For my part I was very sleepy, and thought they were no better than I, indeed, at length I fell asleep, and had like to have fallen down, but this was the last time I ever fell asleep in meeting, though often assaulted by that temptation.

I now began to be lifted up with spiritual pride, and thought myself better than they. But through mercy this did not last long, for in a little time I was brought low, and saw that these were the people to whom I must join.

It may seem strange, that I, who had lived with one of this Society in Dublin, should yet be so great a stranger to them. In answer, let it be considered that during the time I was there I never read one of their books, nor went to one meeting. And besides, I had heard such ridiculous stories of them, as made me

think they were the worst of any Society of people. But God, that knew the sincerity of my heart looked with pity on my weakness, and soon let me see my error.

In a few weeks, an afternoon meeting was held at my Uncle's, to which came that servant of the Lord, William Hammon, who was then made instrumental in convincing me of the truth more perfectly, and helping me over some great doubts, though I believe no one ever sat in greater opposition than I did when he first stood up.

But I was soon brought down, for he preached the Gospel with such power, that I was forced to give up and confess it was the truth. As soon as meeting was ended, I sought to be alone, for I was so broken I was not fit to be seen.

Yet afterwards the Restless Adversary assaulted me again. The morning before this meeting, I had been disputing with my Uncle about baptism, which was the subject that this good man was engaged upon, which he handled so clearly as to answer all my scruples beyond objection.

Yet the Crooked Serpent further alleged that the sermon I had heard, did not proceed from Divine revelation, but that my Uncle and

Aunt had acquainted the Friend with my difficulties, which being strongly suggested, I fell to accusing them of it; but they both cleared themselves, saying they had not seen William Hammon since my coming into these parts, until he came into meeting.

I then concluded that he was a messenger of God to me, and with several cries desired I might be directed aright.

And now, laying aside all prejudice, I set my heart open to receive the truth in the love of it; and the Lord in His own good time revealed to my soul, not only the beauty there is in the truth, and how those should shine that continued faithful to it, but also the emptiness of all shadows, which in their day were glorious, but now the Son of Glory was come to put an end to them all and establish everlasting righteousness in the room thereof, which is a work in the Soul.

He likewise let me see that all I had gone through was to prepare me for this day, and that the time was near, when He would require me to go forth and declare unto others what He, the Great God of Mercy, had done for my soul: at this I was much surprised, and desired to be excused, for fear I should

bring dishonour to the truth, and cause His Holy Name to be evil spoken of.

All this while, I never let anyone know the condition of my mind, nor did I appear like a Friend, fearing a discovery.

I now began to think of returning to my husband, but found a restraint upon me to stay where I was. I then tried to keep School, and hearing of a place for him, I wrote desiring him to come to me, but letting him know nothing of how it was with me.

I loved to go to meetings, but did not like to be seen going on week-days, and to avoid observation, I used to go from my school through the woods to them. But notwithstanding all my care, the neighbours, who were not Friends, soon began to revile me, calling me Quaker, saying they supposed I intended to be a fool and turn preacher. I then received the same censure that I, a little above a year ago, had passed on one of the handmaids of the Lord at Boston; and so weak was I, alas, I could not bear this reproach, and in order to change their opinions, I went into greater excess of apparel than I had had freedom to wear for some time before I became acquainted with Friends.

CHAPTER VI.

HER PERSECUTION.

IN this condition I continued until my husband came, and then began the trial of my faith. Before he reached me, he had heard that I was turned Quaker, at which he stamped with rage, saying, "I had rather have heard she had been dead, well as I love her, for if so all my comfort is gone."

He then came to me, and not having seen him for four months, I got up and met him, saying, "My dear, I am glad to see thee."

At which he fell into a great passion, and said, "The Devil, thee! thee! don't thee me."

I used all the mild means I could to pacify him, and at length got him to speak to my relations. But he was alarmed, and as soon as we were alone he said, "So I see your Quaker relations have made you one."

I told him they had not, which was true, nor had I ever told them how it was with me.

But he would have it that I was a Quaker,

and therefore should not stay amongst them, and having found a place to his mind, he hired himself, and came back directly to fetch me, and in one afternoon he walked nearly thirty miles to keep me from meeting, the next being First day. And on the morrow he took me to the aforesaid place, and hired lodgings at a churchman's house, who was one of the wardens, and a bitter enemy to Friends.

This man used to do all he could to irritate my husband against them, and he would tell me a great deal of ridiculous stuff, but my judgment was too clearly convinced for me to believe him.

I still did not appear like a Friend, but they all believed I was one. When my husband and the churchwarden used to be making their diversions and revilings, I used to sit in silence, but now and then an involuntary sigh would break from me, at which he used to say to my husband, "There, did I not tell you that your wife was a Quaker, and she will be a preacher yet."

Upon which my husband once, in a great rage, came up to me, and shaking his hand over me, said, "You had better be hanged in that day." I then, Peter like, in a panic denied

my being a Quaker, at which great horror seized upon me, which continued for near three months, so that I again feared that by denying the Lord who bought me, the heavens were shut against me, for great darkness surrounded me, and I was plunged into despair.

I used to walk much alone in the woods, where no eye saw, nor ear heard, and there lament my miserable condition, often going from morning to night without breaking my fast. Thus I was brought so low that my life was a burden to me.

The Devil seemed to vaunt that though the sins of my youth were forgiven, yet he was sure of me, for that I had committed the unpardonable sin, and Hell would inevitably be my portion, and my torments would be greater than if I had hanged myself at first.

In this doleful condition I had now to bewail my misery, and even in the night when I could not sleep, under the painful distress of my mind, if my husband perceived me weeping, he would revile me for it. At length when he and his friends thought themselves too weak to overset me (though I feared 'twas done already), he went to the Priest at Chester to advise with him what to do with

me. This man knew I was a member of the Church, for I had shewn him my Certificate. His advice was to take me out of Pensylvania, and to find some place where there were no Quakers, and there it would wear off.

To this my husband agreed, saying "he did not care where he went if he could but restore me to that liveliness of temper which was natural to me, and to that Church of which I was a member."

I, on my part had not spirit to oppose their proposal, neither much cared where I was, for I seemed to have nothing to hope for, but daily expected to be made a spectacle of Divine wrath, and I was possessed by the idea that my end would be by a thunderstorm ere long.

The time of removal came, and I must go. I was not suffered to bid my relations farewell; my husband was poor and kept no horse, so I must travel on foot.

We came to Wilmington (fifteen miles), thence to Philadelphia by water, where he took me to a Tavern, where I soon became the spectacle and discourse of the Company. My husband told them, his wife was turned Quaker, and that he designed, if possible, to

find out some place, where there were none of that sort.

"Oh!" thought I, "I was once in a condition deserving that name, but now, it is over with me. Oh! that I might some time have an opportunity to confess the truth, though I were sure of all manner of cruelties, yet I would not regard them."

These were my concerns, while my husband was entertaining the company with my story, in which he told them I had been a good dancer, but now he could neither get me to dance or sing; upon which one of the company started up, saying, "I'll go and fetch my fiddle, and we'll have a dance." At which my husband was much pleased.

The fiddle came, the sight of which put me in a sad condition, for fear if I refused, my husband would be in a great passion. However, I took this resolution, not to comply whatever be the consequences.

Presently, he came to me, and took my hand, saying, "Come my dear, and take off that gloom, let us have a civil dance, you would, now and then, when you were a good Churchwoman, and that's better than a stiff Quaker."

I, trembling, desired to be excused, but he insisted on it ; and, knowing his temper to be exceeding choleric, I durst not say much, but could not consent. He then pulled me round the room till tears affected my eyes, at sight whereof the musician stopped, and said, " I'll play no more, let your wife alone," of which I was glad.

There was also a man in the company, who came from Freehold in East Jersey, and he said, " I see your wife is a Quaker, but if you'll take my advice, you need not go so far" (my husband's intention had been for Staten Island), come to live amongst us and we'll cure her of her Quakerism, for we want a schoolmaster and mistress too."

To which my husband agreed, and a happy time it was for me, as will be seen by-and-bye ; and the wonderful turn of Providence, who had not yet abandoned me, but raised a glimmering of hope, affording me the answer of peace, in refusing to dance, for which I was more rejoiced than if I were the master of much riches.

And in a flood of tears I said, " Lord, I dread to ask, and yet without Thy gracious pardon I am miserable, I therefore fall down

before Thy throne imploring mercy at thy hand. O Lord, once more, I beseech Thee by my obedience, and then whatsoever Thou commandest, I will obey, and not fear to confess Thee before men."

Thus was my soul engaged before God in sincerity, and He in His tender mercy heard my cry, and in me, hath shewn that *He delighteth not in the death of a Sinner*; for He again set my Soul at liberty, and I could praise Him.

I now longed for an opportunity to confess the truth, which he shewed me would come, but in what manner, I did not see, but believed the word I had heard, which in a little time was fulfilled to me.

CHAPTER VII.

FURTHER HARDSHIPS.

MY husband having agreed to go to Freehold, on our way there we came to Maidenhead, where I went to see the kind Dutchman before mentioned, who made us welcome and invited us to stay a day or two.

While we were there a great meeting of the Presbyterians was held, not only for worship, but for business also. For one of their Preachers being charged with drunkenness was this day to have his trial before a great many Priests and other persons.

We went to this gathering, of which I was afterwards glad. There I perceived great diversions amongst the people about who should be their Shepherd, I greatly pitied their condition, for I now saw beyond the man-made Ministers, and what they preached for, which those at this meeting might have done for themselves, had not the prejudice of Education (which is very prevalent) blinded their eyes.

Some insisted on having the old offender

restored, some wished to have a young man they had had on trial some weeks, a third party was for sending for one from New England. At length, stood up one, and directing himself to the chief speaker, said, "Sir, when we have been at the expense (no small one) of fetching this gentleman from New England, maybe he'll not stay with us."

"Don't you know how to make him?"

"No, Sir."

"I'll tell you then," said he, "give him a good Salary, and I'll engage he'll stay."

Oh! thought I, these mercenary creatures, they are all actuated by one and the same idea, even the love of money, and not the regard of souls.

This (so-called) reverend Gentleman, whom these poor people almost adored, to my knowledge left his flock on Long Island, and moved to Philadelphia where he could get more money. I, myself, have heard some of them on the Island say, they had almost impoverished themselves in order to keep him, but not being able to equal Philadelphia's invitation, he left them without a Shepherd.

This man, therefore, knowing their Ministry, that it all proceeded from one cause,

knew that it might be purchased with the same thing. Surely these are the Shepherds that regard the fleece more than the flock, in whose mouths are lies, saying, " The Lord hath sent them and they are of Christ's Ambassadors," whose command to those He sent was, *Freely ye have received, freely give* : and blessed be His Holy Name, so some do, to this day.

I durst not say anything to my husband of the remarks I had made, but laid them up in my heart, and they served to strengthen me in my resolutions.

Hence we set forward to Freehold, and coming through Stony Brooks, my husband, turning towards me, tauntingly said, " Here's one of Satan's Synagogues, don't you want to be in it ? Oh ! I hope to see you cured of this religion."

I made no answer but went on, and in a little time we came to a large run of water, over which there was no bridge, and being strangers, knew no way to escape, but through we must go.

He carried our clothes, which we had in bundles. I took off my shoes and waded through in my stockings, which somewhat

served to prevent the chill of the water from me, it being very cold and a fall of snow (in Twelfth month). My heart was concerned in prayer that the Lord would sanctify all my afflictions to me, and give me patience to bear whatsoever should be suffered to come upon me. We walked the most part of a mile before we came to the first house, which proved to be a sort of Tavern.

My husband called for some spirituous liquor, but I got some weakened cider mulled, which when I had drank, the cold being struck to my heart, made me extremely sick, insomuch that when we were a little past the house I expected I should have fainted, and not being able to stand, I fell down under a fence. My husband observing, tauntingly said, "What's the matter now, are you drunk? Where's your religion now?"

He knew better, and at that time I believe he pitied me, yet was suffered grievously to afflict me.

In a little time I grew better, and going on came to another Tavern, where we lodged.

The next day I was indifferent well, so we proceeded slowly, and as we journeyed a young man driving an empty cart overtook us.

I desired my husband to ask him to let us ride. He did so, and his request was readily granted. I now thought myself well off, and took it as a great favour; for my proud heart was humbled, and I did not regard the look of it, though the time had been that I would not have been seen in one. This cart belonged to a man at Shrewsbury, and was to go through the place he designed for, so we rode on (but soon we had the care of the team, owing to a failure in the Driver) to Freehold where I was intended to be made a prey of. But see how unforseen things are brought to pass by a providential hand—it is said, "*Shall we do evil that good may come*, God forbid." Yet hence good came to me. Here my husband would have had me stay, while he went to see the team safe home.

I told him, "No, since he had led me through the country like a vagabond, I would not stay behind him." And so we went on, and lodged that night at the house of the man who owned the cart. Next morning, on our return to Freehold, we met a man riding at full speed, who stopping, said to my husband, "Sir, are you a Schoolmaster?"

He answered, "Yes."

"I came to tell you," replied the Stranger, "of two new School-houses, and we want a Master in each, they are two miles apart."

How this stranger came to hear of us, who came but the night before, I never knew, but I was glad he was not one called a Quaker, lest my husband might have thought it had been a plot.

Then turning to my husband, I said, "My dear, look on me with pity, if thou hast any affections left for me, which I hope thou hast —for I am not conscious of having done anything to alienate thee. Here is an opportunity for us both to settle, for I am willing to do all in my power towards earning an honest livelihood."

My expressions found his heart, and after a little pause, he consented, took the young man's directions, and we made towards the place, and on our way came to the house of a worthy Friend, whose wife was a Preacher, though we did not know it.

I was surprised to see the people so kind to us that were strangers. We had not been long in the house before we were invited to lodge there that night, it being the seventh day of the week; I said nothing, but waited to hear

my master speak. He soon consented, saying, "My wife has had a tedious travel, and I pity her," at which kind expressions I was affected, for they were now very seldom used to me.

The kindness of the Friends could not proceed from my appearing in the garb of a Quaker, for I had not yet altered my dress.

The woman of the house, after we had concluded to stay, fixed her eyes on me, and said, "I believe thou hast met with a great deal of trouble." To which I made but little answer.

My husband, observing they were of that sort of people that he had so much endeavoured to shun, would give us no opportunity for any discourse that night; but next morning I let the Friend know a little how it was with me.

Meeting-time came, to which I longed to go, but durst not yet ask my husband, for fear of disturbing him, till we were settled. And, thought I, "if ever I am favoured to be in this place, come life or death, I will fight through, for my salvation is at stake."

The Friend, getting ready for meeting, asked my husband if he would go, saying he knew who were to be our employers, and if they were at meeting, he would speak to them.

My husband then consented to go; then said the Woman-Friend, "And wilt thou let thy wife go?"

The which he denied, making several objections, all which she answered so prudently that he could not be angry, and at last consented, and with joy I went, for I had not been to meeting for four months, and a heavenly meeting this was to me.

I now renewed my Covenant, and saw the Word of the Lord made good, that I should have another opportunity to confess to His Name, for which *my soul did magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in the God of my Salvation*, who had brought strange things to pass. May I ever be preserved in humility, never forgetting His tender mercies to me.

CHAPTER VIII.

HER DETERMINATION.

HERE, according to my desire, we settled, my husband getting one school, and I the other. We took a room at the house of a Friend, one mile from each school and eight miles from the Meeting-house.

Before next First-day we had reached our new settlement : and now I concluded to let my husband see I was determined to join with Friends.

When First-day came, I directed myself to him in this manner : "My dear, art thou willing to let me go to meeting ?"

At which he flew into a great rage, saying, "No, you shall not."

I then drew up my resolution, and I told him, That, as a dutiful wife ought, I was ready to obey all his lawful commands, but when they imposed on my conscience, I no longer dared, for I had already done so, too long, and wronged myself by it. And though he was near, and I loved him as a wife ought,

yet God was nearer than all the world to me, and He had made me sensible this was the way I ought to go; the which I assured him was no small cross to my own will, yet I had given up my heart, and hoped He that called for it would enable me during the residue of my life to keep it steadily devoted to Him, whatever I suffered for it; adding, I hoped not to make any the worse wife to him for it.

But all I could say was in vain; he was inflexible and would not consent.

I had now put my hand to the Plough, and was resolved not to look back; so I went without leave, expecting immediately to be followed and forced back, but he did not pursue me.

I went to one of our neighbours, and got a girl to shew me the way, and then walked on rejoicing and praising God in my heart, who had thus given me power and another opportunity to confess His truth.

Thus for some time I had to go eight miles on foot to meeting, which I never thought hard. My husband soon bought a horse, but would not let me ride him, neither when my shoes were worn out would he let me have a

new pair ; thinking by that means to keep me from going to meeting, but I took strings and tied round to keep them on.

He now, finding no hard usage could alter my resolutions, neither threatening to beat me—nor doing it (for he several times struck me with sore blows) which I endeavoured to bear with patience, believing the time would come when he would see I was in the right (which he afterwards did).

He once came up to me and took out his penknife, saying, "If you go to meeting to-morrow, with this knife I'll cripple you, for you shall not be a Quaker."

I made him no answer, but when morning came I set out as usual, and he was not suffered to hurt me.

In despair of recovering me himself, he now fled to the Priest for help, and told him I had been a very religious woman in the way of the Church of England, was a member of it, and had a good certificate from Long Island, but now was bewitched and turned Quaker, which almost broke his heart.

My husband therefore desired that, as one who had the care of souls, he would come and pay me a visit, and use his endeavours to

reclaim me, and he hoped by the blessing of God it would be done.

The Priest consented to come, the time was set, which was that day two weeks, for he said he could not come sooner.

My husband came home extremely pleased, and told me of it, at which time I smiled and said, "I hope to be enabled to give a reason for the hope that is in me."

At the same time believing the Priest would never trouble me (nor did he) before his appointed time came, it was required of me in a more public manner to confess to the world what I was, and to give up in prayer in meeting. The sight of which and the power that attended it made me tremble, and I could not hold myself still.

I now again desired death, and would freely have given up my natural life a ransom, and what made it harder to me, I was not yet taken under the care of Friends.

What kept me from requesting this, was the fear of being overcome, and bringing a scandal on the Society. I begged to be excused till I was joined, and I would then give up freely.

To which I received this answer as though

I had heard a distinct voice—*I am a covenant keeping God, and the word that I spake to thee, when I found thee in distress, even that I would never leave thee nor forsake thee, if thou wouldest be obedient to that I shall make known to thee, which I will assuredly make good.*

But if thou refuse, my spirit shall not always strive, fear not, I will make way for thee through all thy difficulties, which shall be many—for My Name's Sake.

I then, being sure it was God that spoke, said, "Thy will, O God, be done! I am in Thy hand, do with me according to Thy Word," and gave up.

But after it was over, the Enemy came in like a flood, telling me I had done what I ought not, and should now bring dishonour to this people.

This gave me a little shock, but not at this time to last long.

This day, as usual, I had gone on foot. My husband, as he afterwards told me, was lying on the bed, when these words ran through him, *Lord, where shall I go to shun Thee?*

At which he arose, and seeing it rain, got the horse and came to fetch me, and coming just as meeting broke up, I got on horse-back

as quickly as possible, lest he should hear what had happened.

Nevertheless he heard it, and as soon as we were got into the woods, he began, saying, "What do you mean thus to make my life unhappy? What, could you not be a Quaker without turning fool after this manner?"

I answered in tears, saying, "My dear, look on me with pity, if thou hast any; canst thou think that I, in the bloom of my days, would bear all that thou knowest of, if I did not believe it to be my duty?"

This took hold of him, and taking my hand, he said, "Well I'll e'en give you up, for I see it don't avail to strive; if it be of God, I cannot overthrow it, and if it be of yourself, it will soon fall."

And I saw the tears stand in his eyes, at which my heart was overcome with joy, and I would not have changed conditions with a Queen. I already began to reap the fruits of my obedience, but my trials did not end here.

The time being up that the Priest was to come, but no Priest appeared, my husband went to fetch him, but he would not come, saying he was busy and could not. This so displeased my husband that he would never go

to hear him more, and for some time went to no place of worship.

Now the unwearied Adversary found out another scheme, and with it assaulted so strong that I thought all I had gone through was but little to this.

CHAPTER IX

HER HUSBAND'S DEATH

It came upon me in such an unexpected manner, in hearing a woman relate a book she had read, in which 'twas asserted that Christ was not the Son of God, as soon as she had spoken these words—if a man had spoken, I could not have more distinctly heard these words—"No more he is: it's all a fancy and a contrivance of man." An hour of great darkness fell upon me, which continued for three weeks.

The exercise I was in I am not able to express, neither durst I let anyone know how it was with me. I again sought desolate places, where I might make my moan, and have lain whole nights—and I don't know that my eyes were shut to sleep.

I again thought myself alone, but would never let go my faith in Him, often saying in my heart, "I'll believe till I die," and kept a hope that He that delivered me out of the paw of the Bear, and from the jaws of the

devouring Lion, would, in His own good time, deliver me out of this temptation also; which He in His mercy did, and let me see that this was for my good, in order to prepare me for further service which He had for me to do; and that it was necessary His Ministers should be dipped into all states, that thereby they might be able to speak to all, for which my soul was thankful to Him, the God of Mercy, who had at several times delivered me out of my distress. I found the truth of His Words, *that all things should work for good to those that loved and feared Him*, which I did with my whole heart, and I hope ever shall, while I have a being.

This happened just after my first appearance [in the ministry] and Friends had not been to talk with me, nor did they well know what to do till I had appeared again, which was not for some time.

When the Monthly Meeting appointed four friends to pay me a visit, of which I was glad, I gave them such satisfaction that they left me well satisfied.

I then joined with Friends. My husband still went to no place of worship. One day he said to me, "I'd go to meeting, only I am

afraid I shall hear your clack, which I cannot bear."

I used no persuasion, yet when meeting time came he got the horse, took me behind him, and went to meeting.

But for several months, if he saw me offer to rise he would go out, till one time I got up before he was aware, and then (as he afterwards said) he was ashamed to do it, and from that time never did, nor hindered me from going to meeting.

Though he, poor man, could not take up the Cross, yet his judgment was convinced, and sometimes, in floods of tears, he would say, "My dear, I have seen the beauty there is in truth, and that thou art in the right, and I pray God to preserve thee in it, but as for me the Cross is too heavy for me to bear it."

I told him, "I hoped that He that had given me strength would favour him."

"O!" said he, "I can't bear the reproach thou dost, to be called a 'turncoat,' and become a laughing stock to the world; but I'll no longer hinder thee," which I looked on as a great favour.

My own way was thus far made easy, and

a little hope remained that my prayers would be heard on his account.

In this place he got linked with some that he feared would make game of him, which indeed they already did, asking him when he designed to become a Preacher, for that they saw he intended to turn Quaker and seemed to love his wife better since she did, than before.

We were now in a little house by ourselves, which, though mean, and little to put in it, our bed was better than chaff, yet I was truly content, and did not envy the rich their riches. The only desires I had now were my own preservation, and to be blessed with the reformation of my husband. These men used to come to our house and then provoke my husband to sit up and drink, sometimes till near day, while I have been sorrowing in a stable.

As I once sat in this condition I heard my husband say to the company, "I can't bear any longer to afflict my poor wife in this manner, for whatever you may think of her, I do believe she is a good woman." Upon which he came to me and said, "Come in my dear, God has given thee much patience, I'll

put an end to this practice," and so he did, for this was the last time they sat up late at nights.

My husband now thought if he was in some place where it was not known that he had been so bitter against Friends, he could do better than here; but I was much against his moving, fearing 'twould tend to his hurt, he having been for some months much altered for the better, and he would often in a broken manner condemn his bad usage to me.

I told him I hoped it had been for my good, even to the better establishing me in the truth, and therefore I would not have him be afflicted about that, and according to the measure of grace received I did what I could, both by example and advice for his good; and my advice was for him to fight through here, fearing he would grow weaker and the enemy gain advantage over him, if he thus fled, but all I could say did not prevail against his moving.

Hearing of a place at Borderstown, he went there, but that did not suit. He then moved to Mount Holly, and there we settled. He got a good school and so did I, and here he might have done very well. We soon had our house prettily furnished for poor folks.

I now began to think I wanted but one thing to complete my happiness, namely, the reformation of my husband, the which alas! I had but too much reason to doubt, for it fell out according to my fears, and he grew worse here, and took much to drinking; so that it seemed as if my life was to be one scene of sorrow.

Most earnestly I prayed to Almighty God to endue me with patience to bear my afflictions and submit to his providence, which I can in truth say that I did without murmuring or ever uttering an unsavoury expression to the best of my knowledge, except once, my husband coming home a little in drink (in which frame he was very fractious) and finding me at work by a candle, he came to me, put it out, and fetched me a box on the ear, saying, "You don't earn your light," on which unkind usage (for he had not struck me for two years before, so it went hard with me), I uttered this rash expression, "Thou art a vile man," and was a little angry, but soon recovered and was very sorry for it.

He struck me again, which I received without so much as a word in return, and that likewise displeased him. So he went on

in a distracted manner, uttering several expressions, which bespoke despair, as that he now believed he was predestined to damnation, and he did not care how soon God would strike him dead and the like.

I durst say but little, at length in the bitterness of my soul I broke out in these words, "Lord, look down on my afflictions, and deliver me by some means or other."

I was assured, I soon should be, and so I was, but in such a manner, as I verily thought it would have killed me.

In a little time my husband went to Burlington, where he got in drink, and enlisted himself to go as a common soldier to Cuba in 1740. I had drank many bitter cups, but this seemed to exceed them all, for indeed my very senses seemed to be shaken. I now, a thousand times blamed myself for making such an unadvised request, fearing I had displeased God in it, and though He had granted it, yet, it was in displeasure, and suffered to be in this manner to punish me, but I can say I never desired his death more than my own, nay, not so much.

I have since had cause to believe his mind was benefitted by the undertaking, which hope

makes up for all I have suffered from him, being informed that he did in the Army what he could not do at home, namely, suffered for the testimony of truth.

When they came to prepare for an engagement he refused to fight, for which he was whipped, and brought before the General, who asked him why he enlisted if he would not fight.

"I did it," said he, "in a drunken frolic when the Devil had the better of me, but my judgment is convinced that I ought not to fight, neither will I, whatever I have to suffer for it: I have but one life, and that you may take, if you please, but I'll never take up arms."

They used him with much cruelty to make him yield, but could not; by means thereof he was so disabled, that the General sent him to the Hospital at Chelsea, near London, where, nine months later he died, and I hope made a good end; for which I prayed both night and day, till I heard of his death.

Thus I thought it my duty, to say what I could in his favour, as I have been obliged to say so much of his hard usage of me; all which I hope did me good, and although he

was so bad, yet he had several good properties, and I never thought him the worst of men.

He was one I loved, and had he let religion have her perfect work, I should have thought myself happy in the lowest state of life.

I have cause to bless God, who enabled me in the station of a wife, to do my duty, and now a widow to submit to His will, always believing everything He doeth to be right.

"May He in all stations of life so preserve me by the Arm of His Divine Power, that I may never forget His tender mercies to me, the remembrance whereof doth often bow my soul in humility—before His throne, saying, "Lord what was I, that Thou shouldest reveal to my soul the knowledge of Thy truth, and have done so much for me who rather deserved Thy displeasure. But in me, Thou hast shewn Thy long-suffering and tender mercy.

"May Thou, O God, be glorified and I abased, for it is Thy own works that praise Thee, and of a truth to the humble soul, Thou makest every bitter thing sweet."

Post Scriptum

Her husband had been gone some two or three years before she heard of his death. He

left her near eighty pounds in debt, which by law she was not obliged to answer for want of any effects; yet as there were many creditors who complained, saying they "would not have trusted him if it had not been for his wife's sake," she therefore (that Truth might not suffer) engaged her word to pay them all as fast as she could.

So soon as ability was afforded she settled steadily to the business of school-keeping, and with that and her needle maintained herself handsomely, and by degrees paid off near all the said debts in the time of her widowhood; in which time she also travelled considerably in the service of Truth.

In Ninth month 1746 we were married at Burlington, West Jersey, in endeared affections; the power of Truth greatly prevailed at the time, which blessing through mercy continuing, made the company of each other dear and delightful to a wish. Yet we must part.

Sufficiently convinced that her Lord and Master called for her service abroad, my heart was prepared and made willing to resign a darling object indeed of my love and delight.

And though it hath pleased the Divine Will

to remove her, yet being fully satisfied that she is taken from the troubles of time to a happy eternity, I enjoy a comfortable composure of mind with resignation to the Divine Will, believing, as she did, that all things He doth are right, never having once repented giving her up to the service of Truth, in which she died in Ireland the 16th of Fifth month, 1755.

She left home the 11th of Fifth month, 1753.

Aaron Ashbridge.

ADDENDA

Abstract of a Testimony from the National Meeting of Ireland, *held in* Dublin, *concerning* Elizabeth Ashbridge.

IN the year 1753, apprehending it required of her to visit the meetings of Friends in England and Ireland, she left her habitation with the consent of her husband, and the unity and approbation of Friends, as appears by her certificate, and performed a religious visit to many meetings in this nation, to the general satisfaction of Friends; wherein she endured so much bodily hardship in travelling, and underwent so much spiritual exercise, that she fell dangerously ill at the city of Cork.

After recovering strength so as to be able to proceed on her journey, she left Cork and came to Waterford, to the house of our friend John Hutchinson, where she remained very much indisposed for the most part of fourteen weeks; and in that interval was at the province meeting of Clonmell, where she had

extraordinary service. From thence she got to the county of Carlow, to the house of our friend Robert Leeky; while there some expressions which she uttered in an affecting manner were taken down in writing, and are as follow.

The 7th of Fifth month, 1755, being sorely afflicted with pain of body, she expressed her fear of not being patient enough under it, but several times desired she might, saying, "O, dearest Goodness, grant me patience till my change come, and then do not forsake me, Lord of my life." Speaking of what she had suffered, she observed, "Words could not express, nor thoughts conceive, what she had gone through during the past seven months; for what cause the Lord only knew. Although it had been so with her, yet she would not have any to be discouraged, for her Master was a good Master, and she did not grudge suffering for Him. Though He chastise His children, it is for some good end; sometimes for their own and sometimes for the good of others." She said, "She did not repent coming into this nation, being satisfied she was in her place, and that it was the requiring of Him who had supported her to a miracle: and now

it looked as if she and her companion were sent to lay down their lives in the cause of Truth," her companion, Sarah Worral, having departed this life at Cork a short time before ; "that many faithful servants had been sufferers in this land, and as they were not the first so they would not be the last." Those who had put their hands to the plough, she desired might go on with courage, and said, "God was on their side, and it was happy for those who remembered their Creator in the days of their youth."

Another time, when in extreme pain, she cried out, "Lord, look down upon me," begged "that patience, her old companion, might not leave her," and said, "Although pain of body was her portion at present, through the mercies of a gracious God her mind was pretty easy."

Sometimes she feared she was not quite fitted for that glorious mansion which she aimed at, and into which nothing that is unholy can enter ; yet had a hope it was not in wrath that she was chastised, as she felt the touches of Divine Love in her soul, and said "she loved the Truth, and those that loved it were precious to her life, whether relations or

others; and that she had sought it from her youth, and was thankful for being preserved so as not to bring a blemish on it; still she made profession thereof, and had done what she could for it."

A Friend taking leave of her, she told him, "whether he heard of her life or death, she hoped it would be well." Some Friends being with her, she said something of the singularity of her trials, but that "the hand that permitted them had an indisputable right," to which she seemed resigned whether in life or death, hoping it would be well. She said "she loved the Truth, and it had been her support," and desired those who had begun to walk in it "to keep close to it, and it would never leave them."

She seemed thankful that the beauty of this world, and the enjoyments of it, were stained in her views, and she made willing to give up all; the hardest to part with was her dear husband, from whom she was so far separated, but even that was made easier than she could expect. Being wished a good night's rest, she said "she did not expect to be free from pain, but that every night the Lord sent was good; and though uneasy, hoped they would all be

good nights, and when once the gulph was passed she should have rest."

She said "she endeavoured to live without a will, and hoped she had borne her afflictions with a degree of Christian fortitude." Being in great pain, and asked whether she would be settled, she said "none could settle her but One, and in His own time she hoped He would." Then cried out, "Dearest Lord, though Thou slay me, I will die at Thy feet, for I have loved Thee more than life."

She gratefully acknowledged the care and tenderness shewn to her, and counted it a high favour that the hearts of her friends were opened to receive and sympathise with her. She spoke of the exercises of mind she went through before her convincement, and of the time she got relief from great distress and was enabled to make covenant with the Lord; "which time she hoped she should never forget, being desirous often to return to Bethel, and to remember the time of her espousals." She acknowledged the advantage there was "in being deeply tried, and that it was the way to be enabled to speak comfortably to others."

Having grown weaker for several days, she

departed this life in a quiet frame the 16th of Fifth month, 1755, and on the 19th her corpse, accompanied by many Friends, was buried in Friends' burying-ground at Ballybrumhill, where several testimonies were borne to the Truth.

To this account of her last Sickness and Death, the National Meeting of Ireland adds this Testimony :

She was a woman of an excellent natural understanding ; in her conversation cheerful, yet grave and instructive ; she felt the afflictions of others with a tender sympathy, and bore her own with patience and resignation.

As a minister, she was deep in travail, clear in her openings, plain and pertinent in her expressions, solid and awful in her deportment, and attended with that baptising power which is the evidence of a living ministry, and which so evidently attended her in the last testimony she bore in a public meeting, in great bodily weakness, that most or all present were reached and deeply affected thereby, and a young woman was at that time convinced of the Truth, which was as a seal to the finishing of her service in the work

of the ministry ; and in which, being so bound to the last, we have no doubt but she now receives the reward of the faithful servant, and is entered into the joy of her Lord.

A Lamentation on the Death of Elizabeth Ashbridge, *sent to* Susannah Hutton, *of* Ireland, *in a Private Letter, and Printed at the end of the Edition of her Life published at Nantwich*, 1774.

The dolour of my bleeding heart no tongue or pen can declare, my hope, which I thought well grounded, being raised very high in expectation of being once more, in time, rejoicing with my dearly-beloved, in the presence of the Lord, as we have often done with unexpressible pleasure. The strongest sacred ties, as well as the most tender natural affection endearing is now all cut off, quick and unfinished.

O lovely creature ! possest of a more lovely mind, adorned with grace and truth, and exalted on the wings of everlasting love, thou art fled to regions of eternal peace and rest, there always to enjoy the full fruition of that Divine soul-melting pleasure which was thy chief concern to seek for thyself and others

whilst on earth. Oh ! that it had been my happy lot to have gone with thee through time into eternity ; all this world, if ten times more worth and at my command, would I now gladly give to be where thou art, ever in perfect peace, where no torment toucheth ; I lament my loss and the Church's loss of thee ; O noble warrior, thou gavest up thy life in a glorious cause. I bewail my lonely condition.

I mourn as a dove without his mate ; I sorrow, yet with hope that my soul may also see an end of trouble, which I don't expect in this world, having nothing in itself for which I ever desire to live. Therefore, O Lord, do Thou prepare and let me go hence out of the way of temptations, which sorely beset me, and yet Thy will be done. Written the next morning after the grievous Aaron Ashbridge's account came, which was the 11th of Eighth month, 1755.

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